University System Trustees Approve Strategic Plan

Following more than a year of hearings and revisions, the University of Maine System Board of Trustees approved a long-term Strategic Plan on Sept. 20.

Meeting in Orono at the University of Maine, trustees voted unanimously, with one absent member, to approve a significantly modified version of the Strategic Plan, which was initially presented in draft form in March. A revised version was issued Sept. 10, following more than 120 hours of public-comment sessions across the state, as well as review of hundreds of pages of correspondence.

“The Strategic Plan recognizes that change is necessary, and that maintaining the status quo is not the answer,” said Charles L. Johnson, III, chair of the Board. “Today’s vote on the Strategic Plan will re-engineer our University System to ensure its value and vitality for the years ahead.”

University System Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal credited the trustees for their work on the Plan. He cited the Board’s statutory responsibility for planning and fiscal management and praised members’ commitment of time and energy.

“The Plan contains good things for Maine’s future,” Westphal said. “Once implemented, the Plan will provide more resources, more educational opportunities, and in time, an improved infrastructure that will strengthen the value and benefits of our public universities.”

The principal objectives of the Strategic Plan are to enhance academic quality, reduce administrative costs, and expand partnerships with public and private-sector entities. Maine’s public universities also face a projected $102 million, five-year financial structural gap in current and priority operations.

The Plan, adopted Sept. 20, includes merging the University of Maine at Augusta with the

Continued on page 3

UMS Receives Grant for State-wide Financial Aid Strategy

Boosting its efforts to expand financial aid offerings among the state’s public universities, the University of Maine System received a $290,000 grant in June for development of a state-wide financial aid strategy. The grant was received from the Davis Educational Foundation, established by Stanton and Elisabeth Davis after his retirement as chairman of Shaw’s Supermarkets, Inc.

“This funding will allow the University System to develop a comprehensive vision for financial aid policy and strategy,” says UMS Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal. “It will help us ensure that more Maine students have access to higher education opportunities.”

The funding will allow UMS to compile critical data about Maine high school graduates in order to establish better financial aid policies and remove barriers to postsecondary education. The data will also allow the University System to work with state leaders to establish policies that best serve the needs of Maine students.

The grant builds on the work that the University of Maine System has initiated through a Task Force on Financial Aid. The Task Force will present recommendations pertaining to financial aid strategies to the UMS Board of Trustees in March 2005.

Board Approves Biennial State Budget Request

During its September meeting, the University of Maine System Board of Trustees approved a state budget request for the two-year period beginning July 1, 2005, and concluding June 30, 2007. The request seeks an additional $14.6 million in state funding to continue current levels of academic, research, and public service activities. It also seeks funds for new UMS initiatives, such as $5.5 million for additional student financial aid; $1.4 million to help expand high-demand programs in K-12 teacher education and in nursing; $5.0 million in state research and development funding; and $2.5 million for distance education technology and library services.

“The state budget request is a major element of our overall plans to ensure high-quality, affordable, and accessible educational opportunities,” said UMS Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal. “Our Strategic Plan includes more emphasis on private-sector fundraising, federal and foundation grants, increased enrollments, and partnerships and innovations to help provide the financial resources to fulfill our mission.”

The request will be submitted to Governor Baldacci for consideration as part of his biennial budget proposal to the Legislature.
HELPING VETERANS PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION — CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF “GI BILLS”

As part of the University System, the Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education Programs, located in Winthrop, helps veterans take advantage of the higher education and training opportunities available to them through the GI Bills.

Established 60 years ago by President Roosevelt to ease the transition of millions of World War II veterans into civilian life, the original GI Bill changed the face of higher education in the U.S. Several GI Bills have followed to provide assistance to those who serve in defense of the country.

The financial assistance available is substantial. Most veterans who serve on active duty for three years or more, for example, are entitled to receive a minimum of $985 per month to help support full-time enrollment at an approved institution. The funding can also be used for participation in alternative types of learning experiences such as flight training, apprenticeships, and other on-the-job training programs.

“Despite recent increases in benefits, usage of the GI Bills remains relatively low at about 55 percent,” says Don Sweeney, Director of the Agency and the New England Troops to Teachers Program. “We are seeking ways to increase use of the GI Bills and help individuals gain access to the higher education and training opportunities they deserve.”

More information is available at: www.msaa.maine.edu.

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND INFORMATION

“Project Enterprise: Connecting People & Information” is the new name of the University System’s ongoing enterprise resource planning effort, formerly known as the “ERP/PeopleSoft Project.” PeopleSoft® is a web-based software program selected in March 2002 to replace outdated administrative computing systems that were no longer adequate to support the University System’s needs.

The adoption of PeopleSoft has resulted in a significant system-wide change in software and hardware, enabling UMS to keep pace with evolving technology in administrative computing. This undertaking has also provided a welcome opportunity for streamlining and improving University System administrative processes in many areas.

“Project Enterprise is a clear demonstration that the University System can realize significant gains in quality and efficiency through the use of improved technologies and system-wide collaborations,” says UMS Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal.

The first phase of PeopleSoft was implemented in June 2003 for Human Resource Management. Implementation of the Financial Management portion is scheduled for April 4, 2005, and training is being offered throughout the academic year in preparation. Staff members from all UMS institutions are also working together to provide a system-wide perspective for the Student Administration portion of PeopleSoft, scheduled for gradual implementation over several years, beginning in July 2005.

More information is available at: http://www.maine.edu/peoplesoft/.

SUPPORTING MAINE TEACHERS

Maine teachers have expanded access to professional development and support thanks to a partnership among the University of Maine System, the Maine Department of Education (DOE), and local Maine schools. As part of the University System’s Public Education Partnership launched in 2002 to address K-16 needs in Maine, Regional Teacher Developmental Centers (RTDC) have been established to address issues related to the shortage of fully qualified teachers in Maine.

“Our primary focuses right now are assisting teachers with alternate routes to teacher certification and providing support for new teachers,” says Richard Barnes, Director of the UMS RTDC Initiative. “The Centers are a vital resource in establishing a more qualified teaching workforce in Maine.”

In August, former Caribou High School principal David Ouellette was named Coordinator of the RTDC in Aroostook County, one of four centers currently in existence. Other centers include: Down East, led by former Lee principal Kathleen McAvoy; Western Maine, led by UMF Educational Outreach Coordinator Pamela Wilson; and Midcoast, currently in the selection process for a full-time coordinator. The plan calls for the development of four more centers in order to serve every region of Maine.

More information is available at: http://www.maine.edu/edpartnership.html.
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TRUSTEES APPROVE STRATEGIC PLAN (continued from page 1)

University of Southern Maine; partnering with Maine’s community colleges to coordinate resources and programs; creating a formal agreement involving the universities at Fort Kent, Machias, and Presque Isle to share administrative costs and coordinate programs and services; and improving public outreach and private fundraising. Once fully implemented, the UMS projects a net cost-reduction of $12 million annually.

James D. Mullen, chair of the Board’s Strategic Planning Steering Committee, presented the Plan to trustees, explaining that the implementation process will be lengthy and will involve many people.

“The Plan does not solve every one of the System’s needs, but it is not intended to do so,” Mullen explained. “It’s a conceptual framework from which, with a great deal of input from others, we will identify and answer the questions that have arisen and will arise.”

State Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron, a member of the Board of Trustees, said that it is essential that all parties work collaboratively to make the Plan successful.

“We have to think creatively about new ways of serving the educational needs of our state,” she said, in expressing her support for the Strategic Plan. Gendron said the Plan advances the state’s interest in creating a “seamless” educational network that includes the PreK-12 system, community colleges, and Maine’s public universities.

Along with the UMA/USM merger and the three-university consortium, the revised Plan maintains the previously proposed roles for the other University System entities:

— As the state’s land-grant/sea-grant research university with statewide and national responsibilities, the University of Maine will have primary responsibility as Maine’s graduate-level, research, and public service outreach institution.

— The University of Maine at Farmington will serve as a single-campus, public liberal arts college featuring a strong set of teacher-education programs.

— Each of the 11 University College academic outreach centers will be aligned with a university as opposed to being managed by the System’s central office.

— The System administration, under the Chancellor, will work with the Board of Trustees to provide System-wide planning, management, coordination, and oversight, and centralized administrative functions.

Implementation is expected to begin in early 2005. The UMS Strategic Plan is available at http://www.maine.edu/strategicplan.

AROUND THE SYSTEM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

The Princeton Review has rated UMaine in the top 20 nationally in its “Best Buys-Public” category. UMaine economics researchers contributed to the public discussion of issues related to a proposed property tax cap by developing a 53-page report that examined what would have happened to municipal budgets had the cap been in effect last year.... The Institute for Molecular Biophysics, a research consortium to which UMaine belongs, has received funding to acquire one of the world’s most advanced microscopes, which will be the only one of its kind in the U.S.... the UMaine/Vote program has brought national and local candidates to campus, while working to register students to vote.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA

The new Student Technology Center at UMA is providing students with improved services and greater access to state-of-the-art technology. The 40,000 square-foot facility includes student lounges and dining services, the campus bookstore, computer labs (including new music synthesizing and computer imaging facilities) and a lecture hall.... With more than $1 million raised, plans are moving forward for a $1.5 million Holocaust Education Resource Center at UMA.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT FARMINGTON

UMF has been named “One of America’s Best Colleges” by U.S. News & World Report for the 8th consecutive year, ranking No. 2 in the category “Top Public Comprehensive Colleges in the North.”.... Teachers in western Maine again have the opportunity to improve their ability to serve special needs children through graduate-level course offerings at UMF as part of a collaboration with USM.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT FORT KENT

The UMFK campus has been greatly enhanced with the recent addition of two new facilities. The University’s new 150-bed residence hall opened in August. The 47,596 square-foot facility was designed to resemble a ski lodge.... In September, UMFK celebrated the opening of the new Academic Archives/Archives académiques. The 7,584 square-foot, two-story building houses materials and resources relevant to the history, folklore, and folk-life of the historic St. John Valley.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT MACHIAS

UMM has earned distinction as “One of America’s Best Colleges” by U.S. News & World Report, ranking No. 5 in the category “Top Public Comprehensive Colleges in the North.”.... The 2004-05 Libra Lecture Series at UMM is focusing on “Searching for Sustainability.” Dr. David Victor, Director of the Program on Energy and Sustainable Development at Stanford University, opened the program in September, and Dr. Patrick Moore, one of the founders of Greenpeace, will lecture at UMM in October.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT PRESQUE ISLE

Dr. William A. Shields was appointed Acting President in June. Dr. Shields has devoted his career to higher education, including presidential posts at three institutions.... Kim-Anne Perkins, associate professor and director of the Bachelor of Social Work program, was elected president of the Rural Social Work Caucus during its July conference in Salt Lake City.... UMPI students gained valuable experience over the summer through various field-study opportunities, including Archaeology Field School and Geological Field School.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

USM’s Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. The library—thanks to the vision of benefactors Harold and Peggy Osher and the Smith family—has maintained a steadfast commitment to share cartographic treasures dating back to 1475 with students of all ages, scholars, and the public.... Elaine D. Rosen, former Unum Life Insurance Company of America president, has been named president of the USM Foundation. Christopher Emmons, Gorham Savings Bank president and CEO, has been elected vice president. The USM Foundation Board of Directors also welcomes actor and USM alumnus Tony Shalhoub.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OUTREACH CENTERS

In January 2005, most of the 11 University College outreach centers will be fitted with an additional videoconference classroom, further expanding students’ access to university courses and programs. The user-operated videoconference units allow small groups of students at campuses and centers state-wide to meet face-to-face and are ideal for seminar-type courses.
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